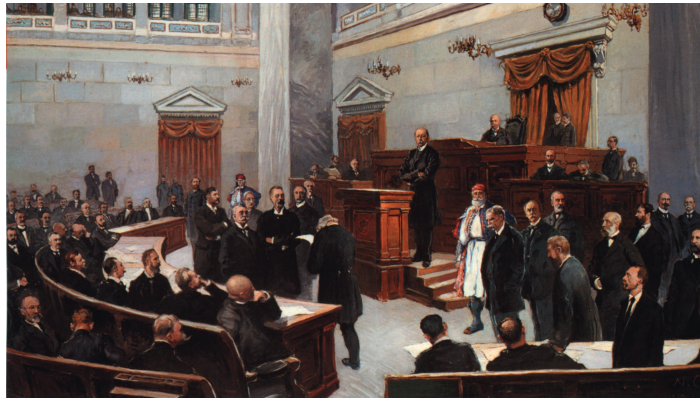


HISTORY OF MODERN GREECE

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THE GREEK ENLIGHTENMENT AND THE HELLENIC NATIONAL REVIVAL

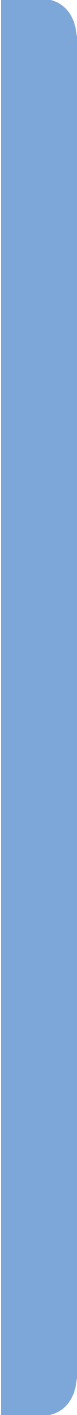
The rise of the Ottoman Empire associated together, for the last time, southeastern Europe, the Black Sea, and the Middle East into a single political realm governed by the law of Islam and the Decrees of the Sultans. The real material benefits of a pacified and unified larger imperial economy and society in the 14th-18th centuries were soon obliterated by military hemorrhage, fiscal pressure, authoritarian rule, absence of any coherent state policy to support the active commercial and productive classes and last, but not least, complete exclusion of the non-Muslim majority of the population in the Balkans and Asia Minor from the body politic. During that time the European world underwent the experiences of the Renaissance, Humanism and Reformation and reached the era of Enlightenment, a new phase of social and intellectual development that meant

the full recognition of individuality as the pivotal value of the modern world, the complete dissociation of science from dogmatic theology and the legitimization of the pursuit of progress and happiness as a potentially possible and desirable goal. The peoples of southeastern Europe, except for a small minority of the non-Muslim elite, did not participate in or even have knowledge of these intellectual developments.

Greek-Orthodox Christians, as any other non-Muslim religious community in the Ottoman Empire, constituted a corporate body that was protected by the Muslim community but was also juridically inferior and subjugated to it. The Greek-Orthodox “Romeoi” were led and represented by their spiritual leader: the Patriarch of Constantinople or, on a local level, their bishops in each diocese. The peoples in southeastern Europe mainly construed their group- and self-identity through their religious affiliation. Since the local



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Balkan aristocracies had been almost completely annihilated, no paramount Christian elite was left to dominate the social and political sphere. Local notable families, Church prelates, and the richest merchants and financiers in the big cities substituted themselves for the extinct aristocrats as political intermediaries and social leaders. Since the end of the 17th century, the Phanariots, a small number of rich and well-educated families that served as official translators for the Sublime Porte and Admiralty and later as rulers in the Danubian principalities, rose on the top of this dominant group. This corporative socio-political structure delegated, on the level of local self-government, authority in religious, familial and even civil affairs to the Greek-Orthodox elite and institutions. Nevertheless, such a power system was as authoritarian and patrimonial as the one in function on the top of the empire.

The second half of the 18th century witnessed a whole new range of developments in the Ottoman Europe. Successive defeats in the hands of the Russian and the Austrian armies had made clear that the once formidable Muslim Empire was about to collapse. The old Christian elite was now less inclined to accept unquestionably Ottoman domination. These external threats were combined, first, with a unique process of political and state-financial fragmentation of power and decentralization that was felt in literally all Ottoman provinces and, second, with a powerful drive towards the transformation of the land tenure system and the subsequent deterioration of the position of the peas-

ants, especially the non-Muslims. The state of oppressive anarchy and economic deprivation felt by a large part of the peasant and urban strata made them less reluctant to challenge openly the rule of their lords. Finally, new opportunities for enrichment through trade with the European economies were given to many Balkan and Anatolian merchants and craftsmen, almost exclusively non-Muslim, and mainly Greek-Orthodox. These formed a new Diaspora of merchants, ship-owners and artisans in Europe, which was closely related to the old Greek merchant Diaspora in the Middle East and the Black Sea. This new and dynamic social group challenged the dominant position of the old Phanariot, Church and civil aristocracy in the Greek-Orthodox community.

Even though many of these men, merchants, notables, Church and civil magistrates were not of Greek descent, they considered themselves Greek-Orthodox "Romeoi", they used Greek as their commercial, cultural or administrative language, and they would be the first to espouse the cause of the Hellenic national revival. Close commercial or educational relations with the enlightened western and central Europe exposed them, along with the Phanariots and their administrative and commercial subordinates and employees, to the influence of the late 18th century Enlightenment. Furthermore, all along the 18th century, a new group of intellectuals, teachers and authors, many of them clergymen, most of whom had studied in Italy or in Germany, were acquainted with the latest European intellectual development and



"The Oath" of a member of the Philiki Etaireia. Oil-painting by Dionysios Tsokos, 1849

had the ambition to participate in it and "transmit" its achievements to their cultural kin. The Greek Enlightenment proved to be a powerful intellectual surge, which almost entirely reconfigured, in less than a century, the personal self-perception and the collective world-view of the leading Greek-Orthodox elite.

Until the French Revolution, the most timid versions of central-European Enlightenment were usually echoed and various projects for a Greek-Orthodox enlightened Monarchy were conceived among the highest spheres of the Church and Phanariot magistrates. The French revolutionary example and, later, the French military presence in Dalmatia, Egypt and the Ionian Islands changed radically the political and the intellectual agenda. The French liberating message was propagated by such men as Rigas of Velestino (1757-1797) – who produced a loyal Greek ver-

sion of the 1793 French Constitution – and Adamantios Korais (1748-1833), the celebrated scholar who was universally respected in Greece. Some of the best educated young men, the most active patriots and the bravest military leaders (brigands or local militia men) espoused this radical message along with a more coherent view of their identity: no more as Greek-Orthodox "Romeoi," but as "Hellenes," heirs of the republican and enlightened tradition of classical Hellas. The new Hellenic identity was not meant to be construed upon ethnic or religious characteristics but upon participation in the common republican and democratic body politic and adoption of the enlightened classical intellectual tradition. In spite of official ecclesiastical censure, obscurantist preaching, political persecution, and finally the reactionary diplomacy of the Holy Alliance and the military might of the Ottomans, in less

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than a quarter of a century a rational revolutionary and republican project was conceived and won the adherence of the youngest and most active members of all social groups. Secret societies, the most important and influential being the *Philiki Etaireia*, were formed and the idea of an imminent and necessary revolt was propagated among the peasant and urban population, although some of the most respected and fervent patriots like Adamantios Koraes and Ioannis Kapodistrias (1776-1831), former Russian deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, felt that any revolutionary movement would be premature.

1821-1832

THE HELLENIC WAR OF INDEPENDENCE AND THE REVOLUTIONARY REPUBLIC

In spite of the faltering of the most important political figures of the Greek-Orthodox community and the negative political situation in Restoration Europe, a revolt instigated by the *Philiki Etaireia* broke out, first in Moldavia in February 1821 and then in March 1821 in many parts of mainland Greece from the Peloponnese to Macedonia. It was initially led by patriotic activists strongly influenced by the European liberal and nationalist movement. From the very beginning the revolutionary authorities adopted a liberal republican discourse and the first Constitutions of the young Hellenic State (1822, 1823, 1827) were clearly drawn upon the ideas of the American and the French Revolutions. The identification of revived Hellenism, democracy, and national sovereignty propagated by these men

found an impressive echo not only in the country itself but in Europe as well. A large movement of solidarity sprung among European intellectuals and liberals, who thought that the Greek Revolution was both the champion of European liberalism in an era of Aristocratic Restoration and the sublime revival of the purest classical matrix of Democracy and Enlightenment. The Philhellenic movement actively supported the Greek Revolution and the great romantic English poet Lord George Gordon Byron (who died in Missolonghi in 1824) is only the most emblematic figure among a large number of European Philhellenes who fought and died “so that Greece might still be free.”

Even though the large number of fighting militia men, sailors, peasants, and other commoners had only a confused and rudimentary view of the democratic and liberal project of the *Philiki Etaireia*, they still adopted its call for an independent Hellenic Republic and a Constitution that would guarantee their political and social emancipation, meaning freedom and land for all. These ideals, however ill understood, mobilized the great majority of the Greek-Orthodox population in mainland Greece and galvanized them to undertake an almost desperate fight against the Ottoman armies. It was estimated that in twelve years of fighting the population of southern Greece decreased from 940,000 to 753,000. In the big urban centers of the Empire, from Constantinople to Smyrna and Larissa, the Greek-Orthodox population and clergy suffered enormously from the extortions of the undisciplined janis-

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saries that the Sublime Porte had let loose. The Patriarch Gregory V himself, the same man who had condemned the Greek Revolution, was hanged by the janissary mob along with many Greek notables of Constantinople who had also been hostile to the revolt. Thus, in spite of the resolute condemnation of this revolt, as well as of any previous one, by the Patriarch and the Holy Synod, the revolutionary War acquired a religious connotation due to the massive, cruel and blind Ottoman repression; this attitude forced the Greek-Orthodox population as a whole to identify itself with the revolutionaries and with their radical cause.

After the first two years the revolution was crushed everywhere except in the Peloponnese, central Greece, Crete, and some of the Aegean Islands like Samos. The Ottoman armies committed ferocious atrocities but were unable to overcome Greek resistance. Even the intervention of the modernized Egyptian army that resulted in the desolation of the countryside and large-scale massacres in Crete and the Peloponnese proved unable to suppress the revolt. Meanwhile, the concert of conservative European Powers as to the necessary subjugation of the Greek revolt was undermined. Influenced by the liberal European Philhellenic movement and public opinion, the governments of Great Britain, France, and Russia tried to reach an agreement that would ensure for Greece an autonomous status in the Ottoman Empire. The Sublime Porte refused any compromise and thus forced the intervention of the allied fleets of the three European powers. The de-



Lord Byron (1788-1824) as a boy

struction of the Ottoman and Egyptian power in the naval battle of Navarino (1827) bent the Ottomans to reason. In the next few years fighting continued, but it was only a matter of time before Greece was recognized as an independent sovereign kingdom.

During the War of Independence all efforts for the implementation of meritorious, efficient and centralized administration of the political, financial and military system were undermined by the rival factions of the provincial notables and military chiefs that were brought up in and had adopted the manners of the late Ottoman corrupt, decentralized and patrimonial administration. Since 1823 civil strife was almost endemic and, as a consequence, the Third National Assembly in Trezina (1827) chose the Corfiot Count Ioannis Kapodistrias, a charismatic and internationally respected personality, as governor of the Greek Republic, hoping that he would be able to

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overcome the fragmentation of central power and impose the necessary reforms. This proved to be impossible for him to obtain because he did not command the indispensable military and financial resources. His projects for a large land distribution program, for the establishment of a modernized and centralized administrative, financial, judicial, ecclesiastical, educational, and military system were never implemented. He was assassinated in September 1831, and the civil conflict that followed came to an end only when the “Three Protective Powers” (Great Britain, France and Russia) selected and imposed a young German prince as King of Greece. It was Otto of the House of Wittelsbach, son of Ludwig, King of Bavaria. The institution of an absolute Monarchy instead of a Republic was the price Greeks had to pay for their inability to accept compromises. It was at the same time the guarantee offered to the conservative powers of the Holy Alliance that Greece would not prove an example to the peoples of Restoration Europe. But the Monarchy was also the key-institution through which the protective powers, and especially Great Britain, exercised their influence upon the Greek government and interfered in national politics. As a result, the dynasties and their entourages identified themselves with the agents that curtailed smooth institutional development.

Furthermore, only a fragment of Greece, the poorest and economically less developed south, was liberated: in total 47,516 km² and 753,400 inhabitants, who were overwhelmingly Greek-Orthodox

except for two small communities of Roman-Catholic Greeks and Greek Jews (romaniotes). The larger percentage of Greeks still lived in the Ottoman Empire in Thessaly, Epirus, Macedonia, Thrace, Crete, Cyprus and the other islands, and in parts of Asia Minor. As a consequence, from the very start all Greeks, living either in the Kingdom of Greece, or in the Ottoman Empire, or in the Septinsular Republic (which was under British protection since 1814) considered the new independent state just the first step towards the unification of all Hellenes in a sovereign constitutional polity. A powerful, if somewhat utopian (in view of the paucity of Greece’s resources and the declared opposition of all European powers), irredentist movement was created that dominated Greek politics until the interwar period.

1832-1862

FROM ABSOLUTIST TO CONSTITUTIONAL MONARCHY

Otto was still a minor when he was elected King of Greece and thus his father chose a tripartite Regency to rule in his name. In the following years a flood of Bavarian military and civil officials came to implement a policy of power centralization, institutional modernization and social reconfiguration. They were mainly assisted by idealistic Philhellenes and by Greek intellectuals, most of whom were born in large urban centers outside the frontiers of the small independent Greece. Foreign and insensitive to the particularities of the country’s social and political life, they were soon to be seen as “arrogant

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intruders” monopolizing the administration and depriving local notables and military chiefs (who were lacking the credentials and knowledge that were necessary for a career in the new bureaucratic administration) of all political influence and power. The Bavarian Regency and its successive governments followed the policy already initiated by Kapodistrias, but this time they commanded the necessary military and diplomatic support to impose their will. A new central and local administration, a regular army, and judicial and education systems following the central European standards were imposed. The Church was soon forced to cut itself off the Patriarchal administration and it was put under the complete control of the royal prerogative. In 1837 the University of Athens, the first such institution in southeastern Europe and the Middle East, opened its gates. In spite of continuous factional strife among Bavarian bureaucrats, Philhellene and Greek officials, and local notables and military chiefs, the novel centralized administration and its institutions proved solid enough and survived.

Unfortunately the new political structures, those of an absolutist German monarchy, were far from the initial project of a constitutional Republic conceived during the Greek War of Independence. The demand for a Constitution and for the distribution of the former Ottoman landed estates (already under effective control by the peasants) by the state became quickly a powerful drive and led, on September 3, 1843, to a revolt that forced the King to grant a Constitution. The elected National



*Otto, King of Greece (1833-1862),
at an early age.
Oil-painting by Petter App*

Assembly worked out the 1844 Constitution that was in line with the other conservative constitutional charters of Europe. According to this Constitution the elected Parliament shared its legislative power with the Monarch and the Senate, whose members were chosen by the Monarch himself. The latter had the power to choose his ministers. In spite of its conservative character, this Constitution established the independence of Justice and guaranteed all human and civil rights. Due to the predominance of small peasant ownership, suffrage was almost universal. Since 1844, Greece became a constitutional state whose main problem remained the distance between the modernity of its institutions and the relative archaism of its economic and social structure. Representative institutions and almost universal suffrage were crippled by lawlessness and political clientelism in the countryside and, in the long-term, by the lack of funds that would permit the creation of the infrastructure that

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was necessary for the grandiose program of institutional and social modernization.

The Wittelsbach era was one of slow economic development and of politics dominated by three parties that were nothing more than confederated factions of local notables and potent military chiefs. Each political party was influenced and sponsored by one of the three Protective Powers that thus exerted an unusually decisive influence on the domestic and foreign policy of Greece. In spite of this, a vivid intellectual life sprung in the few big cities. The educational system grew rapidly, numerous books were printed, newspapers were published and, in less than a generation, a new well-educated public was created. The political system was rapidly growing obsolete.

A very strong patriotic sentiment was built during the long and bloody War of Independence and, since the majority of Greeks still lived unhappily along with the other subjugated Christian populations under the authoritarian Ottoman rule, every diplomatic crisis of the Eastern Question and every revolt, however insignificant, mobilized the Greek citizenry and became an important domestic issue. The successive revolts in Crete, Epirus, Thessaly and Macedonia initiated strong movements of solidarity and demanded Greek military assistance. The National Question thus dominated and haunted Greek politics until the interwar period. An active policy of support for the integrity of the Ottoman Empire, led by the major European powers, was as a consequence resented by most Greeks.

Otto proved to be a fervent patriot but could not distance himself from daily party politics and soon tried to impose his will upon all government matters. He was thus credited with the few successes and all the failures of the young state. After a brief period of popularity during the Crimean War, when British and French troops occupied Athens and Piraeus to prevent Greece from taking part in the war, Otto chose to fully assume the reins of the state. The disfunction of the institutional system had alienated the young generation of notables and politicians and the growing middle classes, which were better educated than their forefathers. The strong liberal movement made its presence clear during the last years of Otto's rule and led to two military revolts (in January and October 1862) that were both strongly supported by large numbers of dissatisfied citizens and officials.

1862-1893

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A LIBERAL PARLIAMENTARY REGIME AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The short period of anarchy and civil turbulence that followed the October 1862 revolution ended with the election of a new King, George I of the Danish Glócksburg House. The government of Great Britain weighted heavily on this choice and, once satisfied with the advantageous solution of the crisis, bent to the old and obstinate demand of the population of the Septinsular Republic, then officially under its protection, to unite

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with Greece. The Union took place in March 1864, and the Heptanesian representatives took part in the deliberations of the National Assembly that voted the new liberal Constitution of 1864. The executive and the legislative powers were now totally separated. A one-chamber parliament was elected with universal male (until 1945) suffrage. Human rights and civil liberties were guaranteed and meticulously guarded against state arbitrariness.

The King's exclusive right to choose the ministers of his government and the strong tendency of every royal government to interfere in the elections for parliament, soon led to a bitter political strife that ended with the imposition of the "principle of parliamentarism". Since 1875, the head of the Greek State asks the political leader who enjoys the majority in Parliament to form a government and this leader and all his ministers are responsible to parliament. In the final quarter of the 19th century political life was dominated by a stable two-party political system led by influential political figures like the liberal Charilaos Trikoupis and the democrats Alexander Koumoundouros and Theodore Deliyannis. Trikoupis governed through most of the period 1880-1895 and associated himself with the sweeping modernizing reforms of the Greek administration, justice, army and education systems.

Institutional maturity was associated with rapid economic growth, initiated in the late 1860s by the foundation of the first mechanized mills and factories in Piraeus, Hermoupolis and other Greek cities. Meanwhile, new banks were



Charilaos Trikoupis

founded and the prosperous Greek Diaspora started investing in independent Greece. The export of currants, olive oil, tobacco and other products of intensive arboriculture financed the rapidly increasing imports of wheat and manufactures. The growing anticipation of a still more rapid economic growth was fuelled by the incorporation of Thessaly and the Epirotan province of Arta to the Kingdom in 1881. The extensive plains of Thessaly were seen as the future Greek granary that would alleviate pressure for wheat imports and save money for investment in more productive sectors of the economy. Unfortunately, the sharecropping system in use in the extensive and archaic Thessalian and Epirotan large farms (*tchiftliks*) owned by rich merchants and financiers of the Greek Diaspora tended to restrict production at subsistence level. Trikoupis, a staunch liberal, led a policy favoring absentee landowners, most of whom were members of the wealthy Greek Diaspora. On the other hand, he alienated the newly liberated Greek sharecroppers

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and opened the way for intense political and social unrest in Thessaly and Arta. Economically, the incorporation of these provinces proved much more a liability than an asset for the emerging Greek industry.

Apart from bureaucratic modernization, Trikoupis envisaged and obstinately followed a policy of expensive public works: railroads, highways, ports, and lighthouses. In order to obtain the funds needed he engaged Greece in a large program of public borrowing in the international capital market. The unexpected diplomatic crisis of 1885-1886 and the heavy military expenses initiated by the growing rivalry with the new Bulgarian state over Macedonia and Thrace weighted further upon the Greek budget. Since the epic Cretan revolt of 1866-1869, every new crisis of the Eastern Question (1875-1881, 1885-1886, and 1896-1897) inflated public expenses to even higher levels. In spite of the imposition of new indirect taxes, public receipts never covered the growing expenses and new loans were contracted to pay the interests of past loans. Finally, in December 1893, unable to find new loans, Trikoupis was obliged to cease servicing the Greek public debt, causing a unanimous international reprehension.

1893-1909

ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CRISIS

The budgetary crisis was combined with a devastating agricultural crisis due to the imposition, in 1893, of protective tariffs on Greek agricultural exports by France. These tariffs literally closed the French

market to currants and were the cause of a long-term income crisis that hit the greater part of peasants in southern Greece. The acute economic and financial difficulties exacerbated the social friction caused by heavy indirect taxation and the "Agrarian Question" in Thessaly. The most visible symptom of the adverse results of the chronic income crisis in the agrarian sector was the rapidly growing transatlantic emigration that literally drove away, mainly to the USA, a very large number of Greek peasants. The annual rate of demographic growth, which was as high as 1.5% in the 19th century, was halved, during the 1896-1920 period, to 0.8%.

This was only one reason of the pessimistic mood in Greece at that time. The severe ethnic strife in Macedonia and Crete weighted heavily upon the intellectual and moral climate, leading to the formation of aggressive nationalist private societies, like the *Ethniki Etaireia*, which called for an active military intervention on behalf of the "oppressed national kin" in Crete and Macedonia. The Cretan revolt that broke out in 1896 had a dramatic effect on public opinion in Greece and the bungling management of the following diplomatic crisis by the Deliyannis government compelled Greece to a war with the Ottoman Empire that it was not prepared for and secretly wished to avoid. The intervention of the Great Powers helped the country transform a military disaster into a diplomatic draw. Greece paid a heavy financial indemnity to the Ottomans, but Crete became an autonomous principality under Ottoman suzerainty with a Christian

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governor chosen by the Greek government. Prince George of Greece was appointed as its first governor and since then Crete was all but officially united with Greece.

The foreign creditors of Greece were those who really profited from the outcome of the Greek-Ottoman War of 1897. During peace negotiations, the Greek government consented to the creation of an International Financial Committee that would have the power to control Greek revenues from specific tariffs and monopolies. The IFC would ensure the service of the public debt and exert a right of inspection on Greek finances for many years. Contrary to what was thought at the time, the IFC, that lasted until the end of the second World War, had a beneficial influence on Greek finances since it helped Greece put public expenses in order and rationalize the use of revenues.

The Greek military defeat was nevertheless perceived as a symptom of national decay and as a strong omen of forthcoming national disasters. Many sought solutions in issues they considered to be the source of national regeneration, like religion or language. The so-called “language question” sharply divided Greek intellectuals in two parts: the more conservative ones continued to uphold that *katharevousa*, a “purified” artificial version of Greek conceived by scholars like Koraes in the early 19th century, should remain the only language in use in Greek education and administration, while younger radicals believed that modern Greek *demotike*, the “popular” vernacular language, should be substituted for the inanimate



Eleftherios Venizelos

katharevousa at all levels of use. Demoticists were either romantic nationalists, who believed that the Greek language constituted the basic element of Greek national identity and an animated medium for the transmission of the “eternal” spirit of Hellenic tradition, or socialists for whom the use of the vernacular would assist the education and enlightenment of popular classes. The intellectual and the political realm split into two bitterly opposed groups and, only after many intellectual mutations, educational reforms and political reconfigurations, this controversial issue closed in 1976 when a mild version of the *Demotike* was officially accepted as the standard language in use.

The development of the national conflict in Ottoman Macedonia was the most urgent subject of concern for the Greek state and public opinion. The “Schism” of the Bulgarian Exarchate, that is, the arbitrary secession of the Bulgarian dioceses from the Greek-Orthodox Patriarchate of Constan-

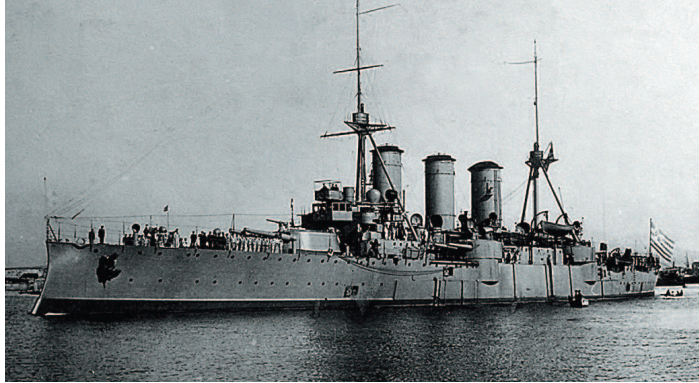


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tinople in 1871, and the Berlin Treaty that concluded the war between Russia and the Ottoman Empire in 1878, had planted the seeds of later imperialist interventions and national conflicts and wars in the Balkans. Greeks, Bulgarians, Serbs, and Albanians were opposed in a fight for ecclesiastical, educational, and finally military control of the Ottoman provinces in Europe. Christian villagers, poor sharecroppers, small-owners and transhumant shepherds, were soon compelled to choose their ecclesiastical and educational affiliation under the pressure of militias of irregulars armed by all the parties concerned. The Bulgarian *komitadji* bands were the first to exert this kind of armed propaganda and were successful until the reckless Ilinden uprising in 1903, which ended in a bloodshed perpetrated by the Ottoman army. This defeat led to internal friction among the Bulgarian nationalists and later to a series of intrigues and bloody retaliations between the “supremacists,” who were unconditionally loyal to the Bulgarian national cause, and the “federalists,” who were considering the possibility of an autonomous Slav-Macedonian national entity. The cautious Greek policy was much more successful in expanding the influence of its national educational system in Macedonia and later in ensuring, with the use of armed militias, the security of those villages that opted for the Patriarchate and against the Bulgarian Exarchate. When the “Young-Turk Revolution” won power in 1908, Greeks and Serbs were in an advantageous position in Macedonia at the expense of Bulgaria.

The Young-Turk military revolt had promised the re-enactment of the Ottoman Constitution of 1875 and the end of all political, national, and religious oppression in the Ottoman realm. After a short period of inter-communal fraternity and great liberal and national expectations of all the nationalities in the Ottoman empire, the aggressive Turkish nationalism of the Young-Turk leaders and their centralizing policy alienated not only the Christian nationalities but also the Albanian and Arab nationalists. The Greeks of the Ottoman Empire and the affluent Greek Diaspora were soon to understand that there was little room for them in the new Young Turk nationalist order.

In Greece the Young-Turk revolution was seen as the last in a series of national humiliations since a reinvigorated Turkey might have invalidated any hope for the liberation of those Greek provinces that were still under Ottoman rule. Growing dissatisfaction with the political parties, distrust against the dynasty and a sense of moral decline led a group of young officers to follow the Young-Turk example and form a “Military League” which called for the reorganization and modernization of the Greek Army and Navy, the dismissal of royal princes from any post of military authority and, finally, the reform and “moral sanitation” of the political system. The hesitant reaction of the government precipitated the military coup in August 1909 that was acclaimed by the public opinion that was tired from the perceived government inability to solve the urgent national and social problems and irritated by the continuous royal interference in politics. Soon a young Cretan liberal, Eleutherios



Warship Averof, Balkan Wars 1912-1913

Venizelos (1864-1936), was invited to form a government and to organize the election for a National Assembly that would amend the Constitution of 1864.

Contrary to the opinion of contemporaries, Greece was not declining in the beginning of the 20th century. The extraordinary growth of the Greek merchant marine, the relative reinvigoration of Greek light industry, the taming of the agricultural income crisis and the expanding remittances coming from Greek emigrants, sailors, and employees of the affluent Greek Diaspora boosted the economy, helped the drachma to reach parity with the golden franc in 1904, and financed a huge program of rearmament. The Venizelos government in 1911 was standing on a very firm base.

1909-1924

**VENIZELOS
AND THE LAST PHASE
OF NATIONAL UNIFICATION**

The amended Constitution of 1911, proposed by Venizelos and his followers, protected civil liberties better and enhanced the inde-

pendence of justice and public administration from partisan politics. Furthermore, Venizelos embraced a policy of institutional modernization and reform of the central and local administration, justice, and educational systems. New specialized ministries were created; policies of rational legal modernization and a limited state intervention in the economy were adopted. More urgently, the army and navy were better armed and modernized, while an active diplomatic campaign succeeded *in extremis* to incorporate Greece into the hurried alliance of Balkan states against the Ottoman Empire.

The Balkan alliance of Greece, Serbia, Montenegro, and Bulgaria proved strong enough to win the first Balkan War (1912) against the Ottoman Empire, but it was unable to reach an agreement as to the partition of the liberated provinces whose Christian populations were ethnically mixed. The Bulgarian government, overconfident of its military superiority, decided to launch a surprise attack against its former allies, Greece and Serbia. This was a grave mis-

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Asia Minor disaster, August 1922

calculation that led to the second Balkan War, which proved to be victorious for Greece and its allies. During the two Balkan Wars (1912-1913) Greece had doubled its territory and population but incorporated for the first time an ethnically mixed population of Christian Slavs and Vlachs, Albanians, Turks, Roms and Pomak Muslims as well as Sepheradin Jews, while a large number of Greeks still remained outside the country's frontiers.

Meanwhile the division of Europe into two camps in the coming World War influenced Greek politics as well. The liberal and modernizing Venizelos, representative of the now overconfident urban bourgeoisie and of the wealthy Greek Diaspora, was a staunch proponent for Greek participation in the war on the side of the Western allies. The old political elite, which felt betrayed by the 1909 coup and resented the accelerated reforms brought about by the Venizelos governments, found its champion in the person of the new King Constantine I (1868-1922), the popular commander-in-

chief of the Greek army during the victorious Balkan Wars. Constantine, who studied in the Prussian military academy and was married to a princess of the Prussian Royal House, was known for his Germanophile feelings and his strong conservative views. Since active participation in the war on the side of the Triple alliance was impossible, he opted for strict neutrality and found unexpected allies in the pacifist Greek Socialist movement. The conservative small-owner peasantry and petty-bourgeoisie of the old Kingdom strongly supported his policy while Venizelos, a strong supporter of Land Reform, was especially popular among the sharecroppers and landless peasants of Thessaly and among all the newly liberated provinces. But it was among unredeemed Greeks, both poor peasants and opulent bourgeois that Venizelos was popular to the point of inspiring a real personality cult. Greece was thus rigidly divided on the important issue of participation in the new war and no compromise was sought. It was also a socio-political cleavage between an author-

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itarian conservative and a liberal modernizing perspective in Greek society. The so-called “National Dissension” (*ethnikos dichasmos*) between liberals and conservatives, Venizelists and anti-Venizelists, Royalists and Republicans, lasted until well into the Second World War.

The King tried to impose his policy and forced Venizelos, who had just won the August 1915 elections, to resign from his post as Prime Minister in October 1915. A few months later a “Revolutionary government” led by Venizelos was formed in Thessaloniki. The national dissension had taken the form of a low-intensity civil war. In June 1917, the Venizelists occupied Athens, ousted Constantine and put his second son Alexander in his place. Greece was one of the victors of the First World War and had the opportunity almost to implement its more ambitious hopes of national unification. The Treaties of Neuilly (1919) and Sevres (1920) were a personal triumph for Venizelos. Western Thrace, which was under Bulgarian rule since 1912, was incorporated into Greece along with Ottoman Eastern Thrace, except Constantinople. The region of Smyrna, partly inhabited by Greeks, was under a Greek protectorate and would be allowed, after a period of five years, to decide in a referendum on its future union with Greece. Venizelos was also obliged to make concessions: the disputed, since 1912, self-declared autonomous province of Northern Epirus was to be incorporated into Albania, while the international treaties ratified the status of the Dodecanese islands, under Italian rule since 1911, and of Cyprus, ruled by Great Britain since 1878 and officially annexed in 1914, as legitimately under the sov-

ereignty of these European powers. The price Greece had to pay for this triumph was active participation in all the post-war military operations of its allies in Crimea (1919) and Asia Minor (1919-1922).



Treaty of Lausanne, July 1923

This price proved too high for a country that had lost its internal ethnic homogeneity, was sharply divided politically, and had a population tired of constant warfare since 1912. At hindsight it is not surprising that Venizelos lost the November 1920 elections. King Alexander had accidentally died a month before the elections and the new Anti-Venizelist government imposed his father, the old King Constantine, as his successor. To curb the Turkish national resistance, led by the brilliant general Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, to the implementation of the Treaties of Sevres, the Greek army, with open British support, launched in the summer of 1920 an unsuccessful attack against Ankara. Greece was rapidly isolated from its former allies, who did not trust Constantine and had, except for Great Britain, already come to an understanding with the Kemalists. Tired from ten long years of fighting, the Greek army succumbed to the massive Turkish attack in August 1922. The Greek-Orthodox and Armenian population of Asia Minor that had openly taken the part of Greece paid a

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heavy penalty in lives lost and properties dilapidated. The millenary Hellenic presence in Asia Minor ended in blood, destruction and forced emigration, an event that has since then haunted collective memory in Greece and has been called the “Asia Minor disaster.”

In the Treaty of Lausanne (July 1923), negotiated by Venizelos himself, Greece was forced to accept the conditions of the victorious young Turkish Republic. Asia Minor, Eastern Thrace and the islands of Imvros and Tenedos were conceded to Turkey. All Greek-Orthodox populations in Turkey and all Muslim populations in Greece were to be *forcibly* “exchanged”. This last harsh clause, in combination with a comparable provision included in the Treaty of Neuilly (1919), which arranged a *voluntary* “exchange of populations” between Greece and Bulgaria, led to the complete reconfiguration of the ethnological characteristics of the countries concerned. Not only Greeks but also Turkish-speaking Christians of inner Anatolia were forced to leave their ancestral lands, while Cretan and other Greek-speaking Muslims of Greece followed Turkish Muslims and moved in the opposite direction. Only the Turkish and Pomak Muslims of Eastern Thrace remained in Greece as a counterpart for the large Greek-Orthodox population of Constantinople that was allowed to remain in Turkey. The Treaty guaranteed the rights of both minorities to unprejudiced justice, free exercise of their religion, education in their national language and, of course, enjoyment of all civil rights and full security of their life and property. Seventy-five years

later the Muslim community of Greece continues to live in its ancestral lands enjoying all the rights of Greek citizenry and all the additional rights granted by the Lausanne Treaty. On the contrary, the Greek community of Istanbul gradually dwindled under the continuous and undisguised discriminatory measures of successive Turkish governments.

1924-1935

THE SECOND HELLENIC REPUBLIC

The army, which evacuated Asia Minor and returned to Greece, was rancorous against what it considered high treason by the royal government. The Venizelist officers easily took power and forced, again, King Constantine to leave the country. Soon afterwards, a Venizelist military court condemned six former ministers and generals to death for their role in the Anatolian campaign, thus exasperating partisan feelings. The radical factions in the Venizelist camp were influential and, in March 1924, the National Assembly declared Greece a Republic. A few weeks later the decision was ratified by a referendum. The young Republic, consecrated in the Constitution of 1927, was extremely fragile not only because it faced the adamant repudiation of the strong royalist minority but also because the republican camp itself, in the absence of Venizelos, was internally divided into various opposing factions.

An impoverished country was overburdened by more than one and a quarter million of destitute refugees who arrived from Asia Minor and the

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Balkans, compared to 420 thousand Muslims and Slavs who forcibly or voluntarily left the country. As a result, Greece was again transformed into a nationally homogeneous country, although inter-communal relations were strained since the refugees and the indigenous peasants were competing for land while, in the industrial sector, refugees offered a miserably low paid working force. It took a generation before refugees were fully assimilated into Greek society, a major achievement in itself given the paucity of financial resources.

Land reform took a radical turn and became a sweeping movement transforming Greece into a country of small-owners and permanently binding the former sharecroppers to the Venizelist side. The newly annexed provinces of northern Greece disposed large plains but were poorly equipped and urgently needed funds for large-scale land improvement and drainage. More funds were needed for the establishment of the refugees in the cities. In consequence, Greek efforts to achieve the socio-economic integration of refugees through large-scale public works and rapid economic recovery depended heavily on foreign loans that were partly contracted under the custody of the League of Nations. The important institutional and economic reforms of the early interwar period were largely imposed by the international community and had a positive long-term influence in the modernization and development of the Greek economy.

Nevertheless, in the short-term, the economic and social situation in the 1920s was extremely severe and widespread economic misery

and social insecurity were exacerbated by the abrupt end of transatlantic emigration that had earlier proved to be an indispensable security valve for the overpopulated agrarian sector. Social unrest and widespread discontent with the functioning of political institutions, combined with explosive international diplomatic disputes, opened the way to violent political controversies and to a coup by general Pangalos (1925-1926). Only the return of Venizelos, who won a sweeping victory in the 1928 elections, temporarily stabilized the political climate and cultivated high hopes once again.

During his last term in office, Venizelos took some impressive and long lasting steps in securing good and constructive relations with Kemalist Turkey, easing the climate of diplomatic confrontation in the Balkans and trying to give a real boost to the ailing Greek economy. The world economic crisis that was only felt in Greece in 1931 swept his efforts away. Every European economy tried to close itself in a protective autarchic shell and Greece was no exception. As a result of this introverted international context, a notable industrial development was observed but, since the country's economic structure was strongly dependant on international commercial and monetary flows, the standard of living stagnated. The growing labor movement and the fear of increasing communist influence among workers led Venizelos and his successors to take measures severely curtailing civil liberties.

The Venizelos government lost the 1932 elections and, for the first

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time since 1922, a royalist government led by P.Tsaldaris was in office. The next years were years of economic austerity, political instability, and social unrest. Venizelos was self-exiled in Paris, leaving the political arena empty of his dominating presence. In the interwar period both Venizelists and Anti-Venizelists had been reduced to internally disintegrating blocs of intriguing politicians and military conspirators, forming secret political and military leagues and preparing military coups. The ultimate Venizelist coup in March 1935 proved to be a disaster and general Kondylis, a former Venizelist officer turned into a royalist, had no difficulty in bringing it down.

1935-1941

THE END OF THE REPUBLIC AND THE ROYAL DICTATORSHIP OF METAXAS

In the few months that succeed the abortive Venizelist coup rapid political developments followed. The royalists in power radically eradicated the army of all Venizelist and democratic officers. King George II (1890-1947), unlike his father, returned as a final resort of social and political stability. By that time a large part of the urban bourgeoisie, that had once been the resolute advocate of Venizelos, scared off by bitter social unrest and by the fictitious “Communist danger,” had become an unconditional supporter of royalist conservative order. Finally, in August 1936, the prime minister John Metaxas (1871-1941) revoked the Constitution with the active support of the King and imposed a dictatorship (1936-1941). Overall po-

litical and ideological oppression took new excessively harsh forms, especially against political, social, and ethnic groups. Inane propaganda and stiff but ludicrous censorship were introduced in Greek political and intellectual life.

Metaxas’ inspiration originated from the Italian Fascist dictatorship but lacking the enabling social strata and socio-political ideology upon which to found a fully operative Fascist regime, he settled for an authoritarian and ruthless personal dictatorship with a surplus of Fascist ritual and kitsch. Communists and socialists were savagely persecuted, tortured and internally exiled. All liberal and democratic politicians, scholars and writers who ventured to question the “Supreme Leader” and his deeds were equally, though less inhumanely, maltreated.

1940-1949

THE SECOND WORLD WAR, RESISTANCE AND CIVIL WAR

The Metaxas Dictatorship, closely monitored by King George and his British patrons, tried to keep Greece out of the Second World War, but the Italian Fascist government chose Greece as its easy victim. An aggressive policy of provocation reached its peak in August 1940, when an Italian submarine torpedoed a Greek destroyer that was harbored in the port of Tinos, where it participated in religious festivities. Finally, in October 28, 1940, Mussolini presented a humiliating ultimatum which Metaxas had no choice but to reject. The Italian dictator gravely miscalculated his actions and, af-



Nazis' occupation of Athens

ter six months of fierce fighting, the Greek army occupied the greater part of south Albania, a country under Italian rule since early 1939.

In April 6, 1941, Hitler decided to help his ailing ally and invaded Yugoslavia and Greece. The Greek army could not match the Germans, who were superior in numbers and equipment, and General Tsolakoglou, disobeying royal orders, capitulated in April 24, 1941. In Crete, the Greek and British forces, with the active participation of the local population, gave a last and desperate battle in May 1941. The Nazis won a Pyrrhic victory and lost the blossom of their airborne power. The impending attack against the Soviet Union was delayed for a few fateful months.

The King, the Greek government and what was left of the Greek Army, Navy and Air force followed the retreating British in Egypt and continued fighting until the final victory of the allies. Recruits were drawn from the Greek Diaspora

and from those young men that continued to break away from Greece. The country itself was occupied for the first time since the Ottoman period and distributed as spoils to the victors. Thrace and Eastern Macedonia were under Bulgarian occupation. The rest of Greece was under Italian rule while the Germans occupied Athens, Thessaloniki and the rest of Macedonia, the greatest part of Crete and the Greek-Turkish frontier. The Bulgarians and the Italians tried to dismember Greece and, in order to do that, they supported separatist movements of small ethnic groups that were living near the frontier. Thus the Italians used the minuscule group of Muslim Albanian Tchams in the Epirotan frontier and unsuccessfully tried to form a Vlach Legion in the Pindus Mountain range. The Bulgarian threat was much more serious, because it used excessive physical brutality and engaged forcible population movements. Many Greeks were driven out of Bulgarian-occupied eastern Macedonia

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and replaced by Bulgarian immigrants. Slav-speaking Greek citizens were incited or forced to declare themselves as Bulgarians. When verbal solicitations did not suffice brutal force was used, as far as in German- and Italian-occupied northern Greek provinces.

The first year of occupation was extremely harsh since the Nazi administration had confiscated all alimentary stock in a country that was deficient in basic foodstuffs and unable, due to the allied naval blockade, to import the necessary food. The winter of 1942 was a period of famine for the urban populations. The poorer, the feebler and the unprotected, maybe as many as 250 thousand, starved to death in the streets of a European capital. A whole year passed before an agreement, sponsored by the Swedish Red Cross, permitted the import of basic foodstuffs. In spite of the desperate economic situation of the country, the collaborationist government was forced to loan huge sums of money to Germany, money that was never paid back.

Greek resistance was organized ever since the first months of occupation. The left-wing National Liberation Front (EAM), the most important of all resistance organizations, was founded in September 27, 1941. The resistance movement began to take massive proportions in 1942. Armed groups were formed such as the EAM-sponsored ELAS, EDES, EKKA, etc. Massive protests and rallies in March 1943 were determinate and strong enough to annul the German plans to forcibly conscript Greek workers to work in German factories. Sabotage and armed attacks were growing in spite of the

fact that Nazi retaliation to any act of resistance was brutal, savage and out of any proportion. The masculine populations of the small town of Calavryta and of numerous villages like Komeno, Kleisoura, Distomo etc. were inhumanely slain in such blind retaliation operations. That did not stop the armed resistance groups from managing to control, by 1944, a large part of the mountainous countryside.

The ultimate horror was the almost complete destruction of the Jews of Greece. Thessaloniki had since the beginning of the 16th century an important Sephardic Jewish community and was one of the most important centers of Jewish culture in the Mediterranean. Its population was expatriated and exterminated by the Nazis. The same was true for most of the other ancient communities, like those of Corfu, Jannina, etc. In Thrace and eastern Macedonia the Bulgarians, who had protected their own national Jewish community, closely collaborated with the Nazis. Only those Jews who participated in the armed resistance or those living in large population centers (as in Athens) were relatively spared. Some small communities (Zante, Katerini and Volos) were successfully evacuated and saved with the help of the Church, resistance groups or local officials. Others still were saved by their Christian neighbors. Nevertheless, the final toll was incredibly heavy: more than 58,800 Greek Jews (82 % of their total number) were exterminated.

Greece suffered during the war a heavy penalty in lost human lives and economic dilapidation. Total demographic losses are estimated at 687,000 dead, to whom some



The liberation of Athens, October 1944

60,000 un-born should be added. The Greek economic and transport infrastructure was destroyed from fighting, bombing, sabotage and plain pillage. But the worst was still to come. Even since 1943 it was evident that the resistance groups were divided along political cleavages and armed clashes occurred. In 1944 the British and the Greek royal government were contemplating an armed confrontation with the left-wing resistance organization EAM that had, by then, been embraced by the majority of Greeks.

In October 1944 Athens was free again and the Greek and British armies were welcomed by an overjoyed nation. Unfortunately, very soon a bitter antagonism became apparent between the leftist resistance organization EAM, which was almost completely dominating the countryside and most of the big cities, and the British-backed royal

government. Despite compromise efforts from both sides, armed conflict broke down in Athens, on December 3, 1944. After a month of fierce street fighting EAM, which never used its full power, and the Greek government reached an agreement in Varkiza (in February 1945), whose enforcement was guaranteed by the British government. The settlement provided for the disarmament of the resistance groups, the “democratization” of the Greek armed forces, police and administration, and the unobstructed preparation of a fair referendum on the monarchy and elections.

None of the articles of this agreement was effectively and fully implemented, except for the partial disarmament and demobilization of the largest part of the left-wing resistance groups. The old Venizelist liberals were used and abused by the King and his conser-

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Hoist of the Greek flag, Acropolis, October 1944

vative followers while in the countryside the white terrorism of the royalists exacerbated political passions. The left-wing opposition was slowly pushed towards civil war or political marginalization. The Communist Party, under its old leader Zachariadis, who returned from Dachau, assumed the role of the major opposition force but was unable to follow a comprehensive and steady political strategy. Its major mistake was to call for abstention from elections precipitated in March 1946. Thus, Communists marginalized themselves in the political arena. The continued provocation and humiliation of former resistance fighters, the reconstruction of an authoritarian administration and army, the complete dominance of royalist and extreme-right wing political forces on the non-communist side, all led

the left-wing opposition to civil war that began in late October 1946.

The civil war was as destructive in lives and economic resources as the previous war, yet more bitter. It was part of the larger Cold War raging all over Europe and it retarded normal democratic political evolution in Greece for thirty years. The USA had taken over, from decrepit Great Britain, the role of sponsor of the royalist governments. After the final defeat of the Communist revolt in August 1949, a large number of its surviving members and sympathizers, who were not self-exiled in Eastern Europe, were detained in concentration camps on small islands, imprisoned, persecuted, etc. Sympathizers or those suspected to be such, possibly two out of three Greeks, were discriminated

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against, ousted from their work in public administration or in education, personally humiliated, etc. Some of them choose to emigrate, others had to accept the complete depredation of their life.

1950-1974

THE “INCOMPLETE” PARLIAMENTARY REGIME AND ITS COLLAPSE

After the end of the Civil War the Communist party was banned, its leftist substitute (EDA) suffered strong political discrimination and the various post-Venizelist liberal centrist parties, which had supported the royalist side in the Civil War, were always suspected for republican proclivities. The King was now in complete control over the army and high administration and was thus dominating the political system. The Greek public administration, justice, education, and army were headed and, in their high echelons, staffed in priority by the same individuals who served under Metaxas or even under the collaborationist governments; they were resolutely royalists, anti-Communists, conservatives with anti-parliamentarian and authoritarian beliefs.

After a short-term liberal interlude (1950-1951), a strong conservative government lead by Papagos came to office. Successive right-wing governments lasted until 1963. Strongly influenced by the King and his powerful entourage, these governments were responsible for the setting up of a “lame” parliamentary system, biased against a large part of Greek citizenry. The Army, truly Royal, totally escaped

political control while its officers were forming secret and less secret leagues closely knitted with groups of obscure politicians and ultra-conservative civil administrators who thought themselves as the true protectors of the King, Faith and Country. Effective power was slipping out of the hands of its institutional possessors.

In spite of the harsh political climate, and after a period of economic reconstruction, the Greek economy started to exhibit high growth rates, associated with a rapid productivity growth, massive rural depopulation, rapid expansion of the Greek Merchant Marine and a real increase in the share of industry in the GDP. The governments led by the young premier Constantine Karamanlis were instrumental in this rapid process of growth that was certainly connected to the rapid amelioration of the international economic environment, the modernization of the country’s transport and communication system, and the growing integration of Greece into western European structures. In 1952 Greece became a full member of NATO and, later, signed an Association Agreement with the European Common Market (Treaty of Athens, July 1961). Rapid growth continued unimpeded until the 1970s and permitted Greece to catch up partly with other economically advanced European economies and become able to join the European Union in 1981. This rapid economic development was not without its bleak side since, between 1960 and 1972, a large part of the agricultural population that left the countryside was not absorbed by the urban



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economy and was forced to emigrate to those European countries which needed extra labor.

The social and political environment of the sixties was not less tumultuous. Karamanlis followed an independent policy that was not always favorably received by the royal entourage while, at the same time, he had to compete against the growing influence of the Left. The fear of a leftist victory in the 1961 elections led to gerrymandering and electoral fraud that adulterated the final results, although the precise responsibility of every individual actor has not yet been established.

Very soon a countrywide outrage mobilized large sectors of the Greek citizenry against the government. The movement was headed by George Papandreou, the elderly leader of the “Union of the Center”, a loose confederation of old liberal Venizelists and dissatisfied conservatives, who finally succeeded in toppling the government. George Papandreou, who triumphed in the February 1964 elections, had been able to garner considerable support from liberal and leftist voters who were discontent with the authoritarian royal governments and had been wrongly perceived by the young King Constantine II as the main thread to his dynasty. Time and again the young and obstinate monarch disavowed openly the Prime minister, while his personal entourage undermined the cohesion of the elected government. The split of the Union of the Center brought Papandreou’s government down in July 1965 but proved unable to stop his growing popularity.

The political climate was poisoned by actions of the unofficial nexus of power that was under royal protection and beyond the control of the legal government. This and other smaller secret right-wing extremist leagues, increasingly following their own aims since 1961, were intimidating political opponents, discriminating against the centrist and leftist parties, and would soon seize the opportunity to implement what they considered as the only solution to political instability and to democracy in general, that is, a dictatorship. A group of colonels won the race against the King’s generals and staged a coup on April 21, 1967, a month before projected elections. The colonels were unknown to all except to the royal conspirators. The eclipsed King tried to regain control of the situation, staged an unsuccessful amateurish coup in December 1967, and when he was beaten left the country.

The military junta followed the steps of all previous dictators, adopting a policy of spendthrift economic paternalism, authoritarian brutality, imprisonment of liberal and leftwing politicians and intellectuals, and censorship. The dictator Papadopoulos himself became infamous for an excessively ridiculous language he used. A growing popular discontent became manifest in 1972 through continuous student protests that led to massive and peaceful demonstrations in November 1973, when the dictatorship tried to legitimize itself through a controlled and limited transfer of power to old conservative politicians. The army was called to “restore” order in Athens, which it did leaving more

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than forty citizens dead. A week later Papadopoulos was ousted by brigadier Ioannidis, his chief of the Military Police and the last stronghold of power in Athens.

The new dictatorship was totally isolated internationally as well as in the country itself. Its only memorable action was the disastrous decision to use the Greek contingent in Cyprus in order to stage a coup against Archbishop Makarios, the President of Cyprus. Cyprus had won its independence in 1960, after an obstinate struggle against the British colonial authorities. Archbishop Makarios had accepted independence as a second best solution after full union with Greece. According to the 1960 Zurich Treaty, Greece, Turkey and Great Britain were collectively guaranteeing the smooth functioning of the Cypriot Constitution and the country's security. Britain had sovereign rights on its two bases on the island, while Greece and Turkey had two small armed contingents. The two communities lived side by side and relations were fair until 1964. Deteriorating intercommunal relations influenced Greek-Turkish relations negatively. Cyprus' neutrality was poorly accepted by the USA, whose policy aimed at incorporating Cyprus into NATO, possibly ensuring a peaceful partition of the island between its two allies, Greece and Turkey. George Papandreou and Archbishop Makarios were strongly against this outcome and successfully blocked it in 1964. Later, the Greek military junta used a nationalist rhetoric to cover up its absence of determination during the 1968 Greek-Turkish crisis. Finally, on July 15, 1974, a coup was staged. The Greek army contingent



Technical University of Athens, snapshot of the rebellion, November 1973

and the Greek-Cypriot militia were busy chasing their internal enemy when, on July 20, the Turkish army invaded the unguarded island, pretending to unilaterally fulfill its right as guarantor of the security of the Turkish Cypriot community. After the immediate collapse of the dictatorship and the restoration of democracy, a truce was negotiated and an agreement of the three guaranteeing powers was sought in vain. The Turkish army, which had total superiority in numbers and equipment on the island, violated the truce and engaged in a second round of military operations on August 15, 1974. It thus reached its true aim to divide firmly the island into two ethnically cleansed areas. The fighting and the voluntary brutality of the Turkish army chased more than 200,000 Greek-Cypriots away from their houses in the north of the island. The majority of the Turkish-Cypriots, urged by their communal leadership, abandoned their houses later on and moved north to the Turkish-occupied areas. Since that time, Turkey illegally occupies the northern part of the island and has since engineered an extensive policy of colonization by Turkish citizens with the intention of making the ethnic separation of the island permanent. Nicosia is a physically divided capital, the last

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The return of Constantine Karamanlis to Greece, July 1974



Accession of Greece in the E.E.C., Athens, May 1979

in Europe after the fall of the Berlin Wall. The Turkish-Cypriot economy commands the most fertile areas of the island, but extensive mismanagement and corruption has reduced it to the status of an underdeveloped country, while the Greek-Cypriot economy has been growing rapidly. Disappointed by the lack of political freedom and economic opportunities, many Turkish-Cypriots emigrated to the UK. The Republic of Cyprus is among the ten countries that newly acceded to the European Union.

THE THIRD HELLENIC REPUBLIC SINCE 1974

The disastrous coup in Cyprus demonstrated beyond any doubt the incapacity of the military dictatorship to prepare Greece not only for peace but for war as well. The national disaster caused by the dictatorship was a natural conclusion of the extreme-right wing culture which, in close identification with the monarchy, had dominated Greek political and intellectual life since 1935. The monarchy and its anti-parliamentary political entourage were both clearly delegitimized along with any anti-liberal and anti-socialist rhetoric.

Constantine Karamanlis, self-exiled

in Paris since 1963, was summoned to form a government and put some order to the mess the dictators left behind. His second period of office (1974-1980) is linked with the impeccable referendum that restored a Greek Republic. His government took credit for securing further economic development, consolidating democratic institutions, legalizing the Communist party, ending political discrimination against the Left and, finally, resolving the famous “language question” by legalizing the use of a mixed Demotike in education and administration. On January 1, 1981 Greece became the tenth member of the European Common Market and has since been a country whose population has shown the highest percentages of identification with a future federal Union, which is the avowed aim of all political parties from the liberal conservatives of Nea Demokratia to the Socialists and the non-communist Left.

Since 1981 the Socialist Party, led by its leader Andreas Papandreou (1919-1996), has won successive electoral victories and dominated, with the exception of a short-term interlude (1990-1993), Greek political life. Papandreou’s greatest achievement was to build a welfare

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Ex-Prime Minister Costas Simitis receives the first euro banknotes celebrating the country's introduction in 12 "euro zone" members, 01-01-2002



President of IOC, Mr Jacques Rogge at the closing ceremony of Athens' Olympics 2004

state, modernize the education system, put a definitive end to all forms of political and social discrimination that had persisted until the late 1970s and finally, with the concurrence of the leadership of all Greek political parties, put a definite end to the symbolic legacy of the civil war. In the 1990s the greatest achievement of the socialist governments, led by Kostas Simitis, was the smooth adoption of the common European currency, the Euro, in January 2002, the Nation finally reaching the apex in its long process of modernization and incorporation into the European institutions. The inclusion of the Republic of Cyprus into the European Union in January 2003, and the net amelioration of the bilateral Greek-Turkish relations have also given new confidence to the Greek citizenry.

Greece was not well prepared for the rapid dislocation of the Cold War military and diplomatic blocs. Having an uneasy relationship with its eastern neighbor, military ally and potential danger, it felt as an isolated island of the European Union until the dramatic events of the 1990s. Economic misery, political instability, low or high-intensity civil wars in its northern and eastern neighbors from the Balkans to

the Caucasus suddenly demonstrated to all Greeks the value and fragility of democratic institutions, inter-communal tolerance and economic affluence. A country of emigrants, Greece turned into a country of immigration, legal or clandestine. Once considering themselves immune from xenophobic intolerance, Greeks have now to adapt themselves to their new environment and accept the fact that they no longer live on a "European" island. Nonetheless it seems that, after the difficult time of first encounters, the country has been able to positively respond to the challenge. The immigrants themselves offered their hard and diligent labor to the national economy, while Greek investments in the larger South-eastern European and Eastern Mediterranean area soared, giving new impetus to the development of these countries. Common prosperity and development in the larger eastern Mediterranean area are once again within our reach, provided that all the parties share their commitment to peace and international cooperation.

USEFUL LINKS

Foundation of the Hellenic World
www.e-history.gr